

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH in SCHOOLS



Creating safe, healthy, sustainable environments



clean environment
healthy children
better education

www.healthyschoolscampaign.org

The connection between children's health and the health of our environment is, perhaps, nowhere more clear than in our nation's schools. The air children breathe and the lessons they learn about wellness and sustainability directly affect their health, today and years in the future.

Healthy children. There is little dispute in the scientific community that children are at higher risk than the general population from environmental stressors. The physical environments to which children are exposed have a profound impact on their health, behavior and ability to learn. Because children spend so many of their waking hours in the classroom, schools play a critical role in students' health.

Healthy communities. Schools are vital places to address environmental health not only because of their direct impact on children, but also because of the role that they play in our society as a whole. The nation's more than 95,000 public schools use more than 454.3 trillion BTUs of energy annually, representing a substantial opportunity to address climate change. Because schools are governed by local boards and play a prominent role in the life of the community, they can also provide strong examples of environmental stewardship and generate community dialogue about the health and sustainability challenges our society faces.

Student achievement. Research documents the positive impact of healthy, sustainable school environments on student learning, supporting schools' key mission of educating the next generation of community members.

Environmental justice. Research shows that schools serving low-income and minority students suffer disproportionately from poor indoor environmental quality, making the issue of environmental health in schools particularly relevant in national efforts to combat health disparities and close the achievement gap.



Healthy Schools Campaign is committed to addressing environmental health in schools on multiple levels:

Encouraging healthy, environmentally responsible school construction, repair and operation.

Recognizing the role that buildings play in both health and sustainability efforts—as well as the role they play in a district's operating budget—HSC works to increase schools' access to the resources necessary to maintain buildings in a safe and responsible way. HSC also works to ensure that new buildings are designed and constructed with health and energy efficiency in mind. HSC published a guidance document on this topic that became an official state document for Illinois and successfully advocated for a state law requiring that schools are built to meet environmentally responsible standards. HSC is also piloting an energy management program for schools and continues to advocate for federal policy requiring responsible school siting and equitable, adequate school building funding.

Advocating for health-promoting environmental policy at the federal, state and local levels.

HSC works with district leaders to implement green practices, advocates for state-level policies and engages with the EPA on national school environmental health issues such as school siting and environmental exposures in schools. HSC is working with the EPA to ensure that the agency develops a more complete understanding about the exposures found in schools, develops best practices for addressing the most hazardous and prevalent exposures and aggressively communicates these recommendations to the school community.

Promoting green cleaning in schools.

HSC has been at the forefront of the effort to change the way schools are cleaned by championing green cleaning, or cleaning to protect health without harming the environment. HSC published and distributed more than 90,000 copies of *The Quick & Easy Guide to Green Cleaning in Schools*, working with a team of more than 45 corporate sponsors and 23 national participating organizations. After successfully advocating for an Illinois policy that requires school districts to implement green cleaning programs, HSC launched an annual national policy summit to connect advocates and build coalitions to bring green clean schools laws to other states. In addition to supporting student and staff health by reducing exposures to potentially toxic cleaning chemicals, green cleaning can utilize a more efficient production and transportation cycle, resulting in lower carbon emissions.

Facilitating implementation of the Chicago Public Schools Environmental Action Plan.

Building on a history of successful collaborations, HSC works with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to implement the stakeholder engagement aspect of the district's pioneering Environmental Action Plan. The plan, which aims to reduce waste, conserve energy, and promote environmental education, is the first of its type to be put forth by a major school district. HSC works with CPS to convene an Environmental Action Plan Taskforce that brings together parents, staff, civic leaders, public officials, non-profit advocates and others to make the vision set forth by the plan a reality in the district's 650+ schools. The lessons gained from this work will be valuable to policy makers as leaders in other districts recognize the vital role of schools in our nation's sustainability efforts.



Introducing healthy, environmentally responsible practices to school food programs.

HSC supports Chicago area schools in establishing meal programs that include fresh, locally-procured foods. HSC also works with state, regional and national allies to advocate for policies which support school regional procurement programs. Most food consumed in schools is highly processed and travels many miles to reach the cafeteria. Using fresh, locally-sourced food reduces the manufacturing and packaging processes and greatly reduces the transportation, all resulting in more environmentally-friendly processes with less impact on global warming. This also supports HSC's goal of ensuring that schoolchildren have access to fresh, tasty produce and develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

Preparing a new generation of environmental stewards in schools.

HSC raises awareness among parents, school nurses, teachers and students on the positive impact of thoughtful, environmentally responsible policies and practices in the school environment. HSC works first to engage and inform stakeholders and then provides leadership development opportunities that help participants become activists for change.

Learn more at:
www.healthyschoolscampaign.org

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Healthy Schools Campaign, an independent not-for-profit organization, is a leading authority on healthy school environments and a voice for people who care about our environment, our children, and education.

How can you get involved?

- **Become an advocate.** Raise your voice for healthy schools and help spread the word as timely issues arise. Visit www.healthyschoolscampaign.org to sign up for our weekly action alerts and policy updates.
- **Stay informed.** Join HSC at our breakfast briefings, Food for Thought series and other events to hear the latest about local and national initiatives, and stay involved at www.healthyschoolscampaign.org/blog.
- **Tell a friend.** Do you know someone who cares about making schools healthy places? Spread the healthy schools message and invite your friends to join in HSC's efforts!
- **Make a gift.** Your contribution can make a real impact on our ability to raise standards for school health. HSC is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization, and gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.
- **Attend our annual benefit.** Join the group at the heart of Cooking up Change, HSC's benefit. This event combines the energy of a cooking competition with a celebration of good friends, good food and good works.

Learn more

To learn more about Healthy Schools Campaign and how you can get involved, please contact Claire Marcy at 312-419-1810 or claire@healthyschoolscampaign.org. You can also learn more online at www.healthyschoolscampaign.org.

